

Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence

10 March 2022

Opening Remarks by Mr. Colm Brophy, T.D., Minister of State for Overseas Development and Diaspora.

Chairman; Members of the Committee

I welcome this opportunity to present the 2022 Estimate for Vote 27: International Co-operation.

Through Vote 27, the Department of Foreign Affairs manages just under sixty percent of Ireland's Official Development Assistance (ODA) programme - known to the public as Irish Aid.

The Vote provides the funding necessary to deliver on the Department's High Level Goal of working for a more just, secure and sustainable world.

Budget Allocation 2022

2022 is the first year in which total ODA will exceed €1 billion, with the Budget day allocation of €1,045 billion an increase of €176 million – or 20% - on the allocation for 2021.

This is the eighth consecutive year in which the overall allocation to the development cooperation programme has increased.

Just under 60% of this total, €605 million, is allocated to the Department of Foreign Affairs and is managed through Vote 27 –

International Co-operation. The allocation to Vote 27 for 2022 is €35 million greater than in 2021.

The remaining 40% of Ireland's overall ODA allocation for this year, a forecast €440.5 million, is managed by other Departments, notably the Departments of Finance and Health, as well as Agriculture, Food and the Marine. A key element is Ireland's contribution to the EU Development Cooperation budget, as well as assessed and voluntary contributions to international organisations managed through other Government Departments. This year also the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, which leads on national refugee response, will account for a portion of Ireland's ODA.

This increased allocation for ODA for 2022 is a demonstration of the Government's commitment to international development.

International development is not simply the right thing to do but, as we have been reminded by the pandemic and, in recent weeks by the war in Ukraine, our effective aid programme is a clear and practical protection of our interests.

Through the Irish Aid programme, we invest in a better, safer and more sustainable world.

Through the quality of our programming, the aid programme helps us expand our influence and strengthen our partnerships, today and for tomorrow.

Ireland's Policy for International Development.

Official Development Assistance (ODA) is an integral component of Ireland's overall foreign policy and national presence overseas, enabling Ireland to respond to complex human needs and humanitarian crises around the world.

As the OECD found in its 2020 peer review of the Irish Aid programme, Ireland is one of the world's leading donors, delivering principled, high quality, untied and coherent development cooperation and humanitarian responses.

A Better World, Ireland's policy for international development, provides the framework for our 'whole of government' development cooperation programme. Rooted in the Sustainable Development Goals, A Better World focuses our efforts on four policy priorities, which together ensure that our programme reaches 'the furthest behind first'. These priorities are:

- gender equality
- reducing humanitarian need
- climate action, and
- strengthening governance.

We deliver on these priorities through working intensely across three clusters of interventions building on areas where Ireland has both

proven expertise and which also resonate with our own development trajectory. These clusters are in the areas of protection, of food and of people.

Ukraine

In recent weeks, since the invasion of Ukraine, Irish Aid has been working with our partners to ensure that Ireland is contributing to the protection of people affected by the conflict, whether in Ukraine or in places where they are taking refuge. Over €10 million in bilateral humanitarian assistance was released immediately, complementing pre-positioned Irish funding which the UN and ICRC has released as part of the Ukraine response. The Irish Aid team is working with partners to put additional supports in place.

Covid pandemic

While the immediate impact of the pandemic is, thankfully, diminishing, COVID-19 will continue to have a negative impact on the development outcomes of people all around the world. That's why this year, through Vote 27, we will continue to invest in global public health and contribute to global efforts to ensure vaccines are available to people regardless of income or where they are from. In addition, officials in my Department continue to work with HSE experts to deliver improvements in public health in partner countries in Africa. Through the bilateral programmes managed by our Embassies in Africa and in Vietnam we are working to mitigate the

long term social and developmental impacts of the pandemic in our partner countries.

Pathway to 0.7%

In the Our Shared Future Programme for Government, we committed to making incremental, sustainable progress towards achieving the UN target of spending 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) to ODA by 2030. This year's allocation is the highest amount allocated by any Government ever to ODA, and a 20% increase on the cash allocation for 2021.

I expect that this figure will correspond to 0.32% of GNI for 2022 given our strong economic recovery, as we balance sustained and sizeable increases Ireland's allocation to ODA in GNI percentage terms against the need to responsibly manage the Irish Aid allocation.

My Department is currently reviewing and building systems that will enable our development programme to grow further, including as a proportion of GNI, in a sustainable and responsible way. We continue to plan carefully and consult with other Government Departments and stakeholders to ensure this is done effectively.

Ireland's international development programme has always been focused on the need to protect the most vulnerable in society. The evolving global context, marked by a global pandemic, conflict, the threat of climate change, extreme violence against women and girls, and growing inequality requires a transformative, integrated approach.

We will continue to invest in our strategic, coherent approach across Government to development cooperation and humanitarian action as well as strengthening our representation and engagement at the European Union, United Nations and other multilateral spaces – including during Ireland’s ongoing term as an elected member of the UN Security Council this year.

Conclusion

Chair, our international development programme focuses on helping those the most in need. However, as we have learned in recent years, what impacts on people abroad also affect us at home in many different ways. Put simply, to be safe at home we need to invest, through the aid programme and our diplomacy, in ensuring others are safe in the places they call home.

I take pride in our reputation as a leader in development cooperation and humanitarian action. Our capacity and effectiveness in responding to complex crises is well regarded, complementing our contributions to the protection of human rights, to peacekeeping, and to disarmament. The values that guide our effective, impactful programming in difficult contexts also serve to protect us, while being an expression of our global solidarity.

I welcome comments and questions from Committee Members.

Thank You